

The plans for the policy the U.S. government carried out had been formulated at a by-invitation-only meeting at the J.F.K. School of Government in March 1990.** This points up the discrepancy between the stated NTIA objectives of opening policy decisions up to public discussion and input versus the actual deeds of the U.S. government of implementing a policy which had been formulated at a private by-invitation-only meeting and which ignored the concerns and needs of the people the policy would affect. Also, on May 1, 1995, there was a public program at the Mid-Manhattan branch of the New York Public Library. The program was about the importance of the Net to people around the world and about the future potential of this new means of communication.

At that meeting, people expressed their concern that the U.S. government would try to impede access to this important resource, rather than help to make it more broadly available. Also, many urged that another meeting be set up to discuss what to do to make this important new resource available to a broader sector of the population.

One of the difficult dilemmas of our times is how to deal with the disparity between government words that they want input into policy decisions, and their actions of ignoring that input. The 1961 MIT Conference on the Future of the Computer, however, which occurred at a similar turning point in the development of the computer, provides helpful perspective. When one doesn't know what the future will be in the short term or the long term, as one participant at that conference pointed out, it is especially important to decide what type of future it was to encourage and to work to make that future a reality. Also at the MIT Conference, C.P. Snow emphasized the importance of having important policy issues discussed by a large number of people and he expressed the conviction that such discussion would eventually have an effect on policy. In addition, those at the MIT Conference expressed a concern that when governments deal with important matters regarding technology and computers, those who have some understanding of the important issues at stake be involved in the decision making process.

The NTIA conference achieved two important results. It clarified that when people have online access and are invited to participate in a public policy discussion of an important issue, they will contribute in a way that identifies the important principles to shape that public policy. The second result was that it demonstrated that the U.S. government policy of privatizing the U.S. portion of the Internet is at odds with the principles clarified during the NTIA online conference called to provide public input into that policy. The online conference also demonstrated that there is a need to take up the challenge to make the future one that will serve the principles of broad and ubiquitous access. The online conference established the principles, but there is now a need to maintain an ever widening public discussion of these issues and to work to determine how to implement those principles.

References

(1) "The Computer in the 21st Century", Scientific American, Special Issue, 1995, p. 4. (Cartoon by Charles Addams, The New Yorker Magazine, 1952, 1980.)

(2) Date: Wed, 23 Nov 1994 00:49:16 -0500
From: Michael Hauben <hauben@columbia.edu>
To: redefus@virtconf.ntia.doc.gov
Cc: avail@virtconf.ntia.doc.gov
Subject: Netizen Speech
Message-ID: <199411230549.AA14335@aloha.cc.columbia.edu>

(3) Date: Mon, 14 Nov 1994 09:07:56 -0800
From: NTIA Virtual Conference <ntia>
Message-ID: <199411141707.JAA06933@virtconf.digex.net>
To: avail, intellec, opnaces, privacy, redefus, standard
Subject: NTIA Virtual Conference KeyNote Address

(4) James McDonough, ep@access.digex.net,
Message-ID: <Pine.SUN.3.91.941116094225 11331A-100000@access2.digex.net>

(5) From: "Cynthia S. Terwilliger" <twigs@umich.edu>
Date: Nov 15 20:42:07 1994
Subject: Re: [AVAIL:32] Re: Key Issues of Affordability and Availability
Message-ID: <Pine.3.89.9411152007.B7150-0100000@sil.s.umich.edu>

(6) Date: Tue, 15 Nov 1994 00:27:42 GMT
From: ab368@virgin.uvi.edu (Bruce Potter)
Message-ID: <1994Nov15.002742.7646@virgin.uvi.edu>
To: avail@virtconf.ntia.doc.gov
Subject: Need for Federal Oversight of Access and Availability (For
Island Resources Foundation, iresource@aol.com)

(7) San Francisco Public Library, "SFPL::NTIA_PUB"@DRANET.DRA.COM
Message-ID: <941116184335.20212906@DRANET.DRA.COM>

(8) From: Sean <sconnell@silver.ucc.indiana.edu>
Subject: Re: [AVAIL:41] my question
Date: Wed, 16 Nov 1994 00:33:24 -0500 (EST)
Message-ID: <199411160841.AAA27213@virtconf.digex.net>

(9) From: jdyer@Hopper.ITC.Virginia.EDU (Jamie Dyer)
Subject: Internet Broadcasting Corp
Message-ID: <CziIDo.96q@murdoch.acc.Virginia.EDU>
Organization: University of Virginia
Date: Sat, 19 Nov 1994 11:25:00GMT

(10) From: bsummers@vt.edu Wed Nov 16 19:59:39 1994
Message-ID: <199411170359.TAA09478@virtconf.digex.net>

(11) From: az908@freenet.carleton.ca (Paul Holden)
Newsgroups: alt.ntia.redefus
Subject: Universal Access and the Feds ..

Reply-To: redefus@virtconf.ntia.doc.gov
Date: Wed Nov 23 22:01:42 1994

(12) San Francisco Public Library, "SFPL::NTIA_PUB"@DRANET.DRA.COM

(13) From: Frank D. Bastiaans, Statistical Analyser, Division Trade
and Transport Date: 16 Nov 1994 16:35:56 MET

(12) San Francisco Public Library, "SFPL::NTIA_PUB"@DRANET.DRA.COM
Subject: Availability of statistics
Reply-To: FBSS@cbs.nl
Message-Id: <81430000.000000000006A.FBSS.Z9H374IJ>

(14) From: Alexander Voiskounsky <vae@motiv.cogsci.msu.su>
Psychology Department, Moscow State University
Newsgroups: alt.ntia.redefus
Subject: Re: [AVAIL & REDEFUS]
Date: Sat Nov 19

(12) San Francisco Public Library, "SFPL::NTIA_PUB"@DRANET.DRA.COM
09:24:42 1994

(15) From: evote@netcom.com (Marilyn Davis) Message-Id:
<199411150111.RAA27335@netcom12.netcom.com>
Subject: Not Information ---> COMMUNICATION
To: redefus@virtconf.ntia.doc.gov
Date: Mon, 14 Nov 1994 17:11:07 -0800 (PST)

(16) From: Michael Hauben <hauben@columbia.edu>
Newsgroups: alt.ntia.avail
Subject: Need to stress concept of active communication and
interconnection
Reply-To: avail@virtconf.ntia.doc.gov
Date: Tue Nov 22 05:03:13 1994

(17) From: "W. Curtiss Priest" <BMSLIB@MITVMA.MIT.EDU>

(18) From: Lew McDaniel <MCDANIEL@wvuadmin3.csc.wvu.edu>

(19) IEEE Annals of the History of Computing, vol 14 no 2, 1992, p. 15.

(20) C. P. Snow, "Scientists and Decision Making," in Management
and the Computer of the Future, (Martin Greenberger, ed.), M.I.T.
Press, Cambridge, MA, 1962, p. 8.

(21) Ibid., p. 9.

(22) J. C. R. Licklider, discussant, "The Computer in the Univer-
sity," in Management and the Computer of the Future, (Martin
Greenberger, ed.), M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA, 1962, p. 206.

(23) Management and the Computer of the Future, p. 32.

(24) See "John McCarthy's 1959 Memorandum," in Annals, vol 14 no
1, 1992, p. 20.

(25) Annals, vol 14 no 2, 1992, p. 20.

(26) Annals, vol 14 no 1, 1992, p. 44.

(27) Annals, vol 14 no 2, 1992, p. 16.

(28) Ibid., p. 31.

(29) Ibid.

(30) From: "Chris Silker" <silke001@maroon.tc.umn.edu>

* The NTIA Virtual Archives are available via the World Wide Web at:
<http://ntiaunix2.ntia.doc.gov:70/11s/virtual>.

** RFC 1192 "Commercialization of the Internet: Summary Report",
Nov. 1990, describes the by-invitation-only meeting that was held
at the Kennedy School of Government in March 1990 to set plans
for the commercialization and privatization of the Internet.